



STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN CONVENTIONAL AND ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLING: FIELD BASED EVIDENCE

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Abstract:

The study examines differences in students' academic achievement in conventional and alternative schools (aka speed schools) in Tigray, Ethiopia. Students in speed schools attended the three-year program of the conventional curriculum in ten months. A total of 372 students from conventional and speed schools were involved in the study. Ten speed school facilitators and eight conventional school teachers responded to questionnaires. Literacy and numeracy tests as well as teacher made tests were used to compare differences. Students in the speed school classes have statistically significantly higher scores on the outcome measures both in numeracy and literacy than those in conventional schools. The same students also scored higher in the teacher made tests. Furthermore, a similar comparison in grade four revealed that students from alternative schools performed relatively higher scores. Policy makers need to critically look into the experiences of speed schools and identify important lessons to apply to conventional schools.

Keywords: academic achievement, speed school, conventional school, student engagement

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1. Introduction

There has been a lot of effort in Ethiopia to provide basic education for all and to improve the quality of school experience. However, a number of school age children are still out of school for various reasons, and thus should get a second chance to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills that enable them to join formal education (UNESCO, 2014).

Various measures have been put in place to provide alternative educational opportunities for these children. For instance, the zero class (otherwise known as o-class) has been introduced to provide basic literacy and numeracy skills to kids who are unable to get access to pre-primary education.

The speed school program, a type of alternative schooling that gives emphasis to activities conducted by students in the process of learning, is another alternative. Speed schools are found to be more effective in developing higher order skills among students (e.g., Khan, Muhammad, Ahmed, Saeed, and Khan, 2012), in improving their academic performance and reducing dropout, truancy, and disruptive behavior (e.g., Hosley, Hosley, & Thein, 2009). As one example of alternative schooling, the speed school's activity-based approach to pedagogy seeks to provide faster as well as more effective learning.

One of the requirements for an alternative education to be effective is for it to be accepted not only by students but also by parents and teachers. It has been indicated that these programs were found to be successful when all the stakeholders involved provide support and recognition. The high expectations teachers set for their students, together with the flexibility of the program to suit the needs of the students, was also mentioned as defining feature of alternative schooling (Aronson, 1995).

A qualitative study conducted by Murray and Holt (2014) revealed that successful alternative school completers mentioned the support and recognition they were getting from their teachers as the key for their success. They mentioned that their teachers were always encouraging them to do their level best and this has helped them complete their study.

In line with the arguments presented above, other studies have also revealed that students who are engaged in schools and those who spend longer time there have been found to achieve higher grades and have lower dropout rates (e.g., Betts, Zau, & Rice, 2003; Klem & Connell, 2014). Student engagement levels have also been associated with students' use of cognitive, metacognitive and self-regulatory strategies to monitor and guide their learning (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). Student engagement, expressed in terms of regular class attendance, being prepared for and participating in class assignment, expending the required effort to complete assignment, has also been found to be peculiar to school completers (Finn & Rock, 1997). Such learner readiness is desirable since it contributes to their commitment to school work (Goodenow, 1993).

The speed school program currently being implemented in selected schools in Ethiopia has been designed to provide basic education for thousands of out of school

children (aged 9 to 14) up to the level expected at Grade 3 of the primary curriculum in just ten months of schooling. Most of the students enrolled into the program have never been to school until the age of 9-14.

The facilitators in the speed school program are 10th grade graduates or higher who have been trained for 21 days on activity based learning (ABL) that equips them with the use of the method to maximum effect. As part of the efforts aimed at making the ABL approach feasible, class sizes are limited to 25 students. As part of the intervention, parents of these children were also contacted and expressed their willingness to send their kids to school.

The speed school classrooms have also different calendar days than the conventional classrooms. Classes are conducted six days a week, not five days as in the conventional classes. The time they devote to literacy and numeracy is also not the same. Speed school classrooms devote a total of 12 hours per week for literacy whereas the conventional classes devote only four hours. The students are given a standardized placement test to be transferred the following year to grade 4 of the conventional school to which the speed school is affiliated.

Another difference is the classroom environment under the two different arrangements. All the four sides of the walls as well as the roof and floor of the speed school classrooms are decorated with locally made materials that encourage the students to exercise numeracy and literacy.

Speed schools give more emphasis to applying learner-centered instructional approaches, with appropriate learning materials being used to supplement instruction. The flexibility in planning has also contributed to providing more possibilities to engage in learning. Classroom observations in these schools revealed that students have a good grasp of curricular contents (Akyeamong, Yohannes, Sabates, & Zeitlyn, 2012).

A number of features of the alternative schools have been identified in the studies reviewed that revealed the peculiarities. However, none of these studies have indicated whether these differences indeed contribute to better learning. This study was, therefore, conducted to make a comparative analysis of academic achievement between students who have completed ten months of the speed school class and those in the conventional schools in grades three. More specifically, the study assessed the quality of the learning environments in speed schools and conventional classrooms, examined the quality of the learning experiences of students under speed schools and conventional classroom context, and compared the learning outcomes of students in speed schools and conventional classes.

2. Materials and Methods

Comparing learning outcomes, described in terms of achievement scores, can be made against nationally set standards learning (e.g., learning competencies). However, the results *per se* do not provide a clear description of the contribution of the learning environment and the process of learning to the differences observed. Assessment of the

attainment of expected learning outcomes among learners also requires examining the learning environments, the contents, and processes. The study employed an empirical design to quantitatively examine the differences in student performance in the two school arrangements. It also employed an examination of the belief systems of teachers as well as observation of the instructional process and the learning environment.

2.1 Procedures

As the study is essentially about comparing the achievement scores of two groups of students attending different arrangements under similar curricular contents, it was mandatory to examine their performances using similar measures developed from the same curriculum. Hence, test items that address the learning competencies in the curriculum were developed by the researchers and commented for their appropriateness by curriculum experts. What is more, to reduce sources of error, attempts were made to include contents equally covered by both groups.

A team was selected and trained to work as data collectors and invigilators in the study sites. During invigilation, the team provided similar directions and clarifications to the students under the two different classroom arrangements. They also conducted classroom observations when teachers have been conducting sessions under the two arrangements and rated their observations using structured checklist.

2.2 Sampling Frame

The study participants were students, teachers, and facilitators in selected first cycle primary schools in four zones in Tigray, Ethiopia. From each school where the two different programs are being conducted, two speed school classrooms and two conventional classrooms were selected. All the students and facilitators from the speed schools and randomly selected sections from the conventional schools were included in the study. Thus, a total of eight teachers, 10 facilitators, 183 students from speed schools, and 189 students from conventional schools participated in the study.

2.3 Data Sources

Both primary and secondary data were considered for the study. Primary data was obtained from test scores, questionnaires, classroom observations and focus group discussions. Secondary data sources regarding academic standing, expressed in students' average scores in basic literacy and numeracy scores, from the two arrangements were obtained from school records.

2.3.1 Outcome Measures

Two types of data sources were used to check the differences in performance among students under the speed schools and conventional schools. One of these was a secondary data source obtained from school records of grade four used to check speed school students' performance after they joined conventional schools in grade four. The other data source was a pair of tests the researchers developed for the present study to

test students' mastery of numeracy and basic literacy skills. The contents and nature of the two types of tests are described below:

2.3.2 Tigrinya Test (the local language)

The *Tigrinya* test was designed considering the five reading components, namely, phonemic awareness, grapho-phonemic awareness, vocabulary, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. Accordingly, the test had four sections, namely, letter recognition, vocabulary (matching word meaning and working out contextual meanings), reading and dictation.

The first four parts had five items each, while the last one was a three-sentence connected text. The first part, which is used to test students' phonemic and grapho-phonemic awareness, addressed words that had letters with different levels of difficulty, including diphthongs. The students were required to listen to a word twice and identify the initial letter from a choice of others that appear to be similar in shape and sound. The next two focused on vocabulary which plays a key role in learning to read. The fourth one, which had one inferential and four literal items, was on reading comprehension which is regarded as the ultimate purpose of reading. The last one was dictation. This is seen as a versatile activity which can help to test students' listening and writing skills and a range of sub-skills, including letter formation, spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, grammar, organization, etc.

2.3.3 Math Test

The Math test had six sections, namely, numbers and fractions, measurement (focusing on length, weight and capacity), problem-solving, the four operations (i.e., division, multiplication, addition, and subtraction), time and money, and lines and shapes. Except the third one, which engages students to solve mathematical matters by using the different operations, each section had five items and knowledge and application of the four operations were integral.

2.4 Teacher Experience Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed in such a way that teachers and the facilitators could reflect on their observations of how their students behave and what efforts they exert in the process of learning. They were also made to comment on the nature of the feedback they provide to students regarding their learning progress (e.g., students ask for clarification when they fail to understand). The questionnaire was designed on a five-point Likert scale, and the teachers and facilitators were instructed to rate the frequency of behavior displayed by students.

2.5 Classroom Observation Checklist

Classroom observation was conducted both in the literacy and numeracy sessions. The items in the checklist are essentially the same as the ones under the teacher experience

questionnaire, except that an independent observer conducted the classroom observation only once.

2.6 Teacher Belief Questionnaire

The teacher belief questionnaire was designed to examine what teachers consider appropriate student and teacher behavior during the process of instruction (e.g., Teachers know a lot more than students; they should not let students develop answers that may be incorrect when teachers can just explain the answers directly). The same questionnaire was presented to qualified school teachers from conventional schools as well as to the school facilitators in the speed schools. The questionnaire was presented on a four point Likert scale.

2.7 Focus Group Discussion

As the pedagogical features of the speed schools are stated to be different from what is commonly employed under the conventional classroom settings, it was mandatory to examine whether the facilitators have a similar understanding of these features. Thus, the focus group discussion addressed issues, such as the facilitations that are provided to lead student learning, their observations of student interaction, and features of the classroom environment. The discussion also addressed issues like the student-facilitator interaction, the nature of assessment and feedback, and facilitators' perception of their job.

3. Results

3.1 Observation Checklist

Classroom observation was conducted by independent observers using an observation checklist. Some of the items in the checklist addressed issues like students' readiness to participate when invited, their readiness to work in group tasks, as well as their classroom discipline. Mean scores indicate that the teachers in conventional classrooms ($M = 3.75$) and facilitators in the speed schools ($M = 3.82$) gave relatively higher ratings as compared to similar observations conducted by an independent rater under the two settings. Although the independent observers gave relatively lower ratings for both school arrangements, the fact that they gave relatively higher ratings schools ($M = 3.04$ for speed schools and $M = 2.67$ for conventional schools) implies that the students under speed school experience better learning than their counterparts.

3.1.1 Teacher Belief Questionnaire

Teachers under the formal schools and the facilitators in the speed schools were asked to describe their beliefs about teaching and learning practices. The questionnaire was presented on a four point Likert scale. Weighted mean values reveal that the ratings made by the facilitators ($M = 3.19$) are slightly higher than the value for conventional school teachers ($M = 2.93$).

3.1.2 Differences in Outcome Measures under the two Arrangements

Two different data sets were considered to examine the differences in outcomes among the two groups, expressed in test scores. One of these was score of students who joined the conventional classes from the speed school classes. Test scores of 31 students who had been in the speed school classrooms and that of 181 students from conventional classrooms were used to check the extent of differences. The results revealed that students under the speed schools have higher mean scores across the various subjects.

Another statistical test was required to examine whether the differences observed are indeed significant. Accordingly, for the data from grade four, an independent samples t-test was conducted to test whether or not students who joined the conventional schools from speed schools do better than those progressing under the conventional track. Results indicated that the mean score of grade four students who joined from speed schools ($M = 77.71$, $SD = 10.52$) is statistically significantly higher than the same score for students who came through the conventional track ($M = 70.34$, $SD = 11.97$), $t(213) = 3.55$, $p < .001$.

Table 1: Independent Samples t-test of Average grade Four Scores for the Two Groups

	Leven's test for equality of variance		t-test for equality of means				
	F	sig	T	df	Sig (2- tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference
Av. score							
Equality of variance assumed	3.03	.083	3.55	213	.000	7.36	2.01
Equality of variance not assumed			3.85	61.79	.000	7.36	1.91

Likewise, an independent samples t-test was employed to compare the differences in student performance under speed schools and conventional schools as measured by tests developed by the research team. The mean scores for the students in both school arrangements were found to be similarly low. However, there is a statistically significant difference in basic literacy test score between students in speed classrooms ($M = 13.4$; $SD = 5.3$), and those in conventional classrooms ($M = 11.0$; $SD = 6.0$), $t(370) = -2.24$, $p < 0.026$, with the students in speed classrooms performing relatively better than their counterparts.

Table 2: Independent Samples t-test for Basic Literacy Scores

	Leven's test for equality of variance		t-test for equality of means				
	F	sig	T	df	Sig (2- tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference
Test score							
Equality of variance assumed	3.601	.059	-2.24	370	.026	-2.475	-.162
Equality of variance not assumed			-2.24	366	.025	-2.474	-.164

The same test was also conducted for numeracy skills between the two groups, and the mean scores are still low for both groups although results indicate that the mean numeracy score of students in the speed classrooms ($M = 11.3$; $SD = 5.8$) was found to be statistically significantly higher than the mean score for students in conventional classrooms ($M = 9.7$, $SD = 6.2$), $t(368) = -2.52$, $p < 0.012$.

Table 3: Independent Samples t-test for Numeracy Scores

	Leven's test for equality of variance		t-test for equality of means				
	F	sig	T	df	Sig (2- tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference
Test score							
Equality of variance assumed	1.216	.271	-2.52	368	.012	-1.578	-.625
Equality of variance not assumed			-2.52	365.6	.012	-1.578	-.625

Results of the study complement with similar observations made in schools in Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region where it has been indicated that the students in the speed schools have a good grasp of curricular contents (Akyeampong et al., 2012).

3.1.3 Focus Group Discussion Results

A focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted with ten discussants ($F=5$; $M=5$). All the discussants were Speed school classroom facilitators. The results are briefly summarized under the following seven emergent themes.

A. Students' Classroom Behavior

Though there are a great deal of things that teachers can do, students' behavior and what they do in the classroom is central. In fact, Burke (2008) says that it is the students who must ultimately be able to manage themselves. In relation to this, the discussants described the students and the Speed school classes in general as highly interactive and relatively independent as they are taught to shoulder responsibility for their learning. For instance, they cited that they often act as classroom leaders, classroom facilitators, and assistants. They attributed the relatively better discipline and self-regulating behavior of the students to such experiences.

Furthermore, the participants described the students' performance as very good for a number of reasons. The use of the Activity Based Learning (ABL) and various locally available teaching aids was among the reasons. ABL, which is learner centered and practice-oriented, is known for ensuring active participation on the part of students. Walls are like storefronts given to teachers and should, therefore, be used to communicate and showcase students' works (Burke, 2008). Accordingly, the use of the six walls (including the floor and the ceiling) for displaying teaching aids was another important feature that they cited. In fact, after a glimpse into the ordinary speed school classes one could argue the said walls are excessively being used. That said, the

participants dubbed the speed school program successful as ex-speed school students continue to do better and at times outperform in latter grades in the conventional program.

Albeit distance of the schools is a significant factor (more importantly in the countryside in Tigray), this, according to the participants, does not appear to be a problem. They reported that the speed school students are highly motivated to learn and participate in the process *all day long, six days a week*. Students show keen interest for learning as well.

B. Strategies for Assisting Students' Learning

The discussants said that Speed school classes are manageable and suitable for cooperative learning because of the small class size (i.e., 25 students per class). In addition, continuous assessment, which according to the discussants, helps facilitators and students identify and deal with learning problems is used. In addition, as part of the range of strategies used to motivate students, token economies (e.g., pens, pencils, and exercise books) are provided to boost participation. The facilitators also reported that feedback is given immediately on a daily basis.

C. The Learning Environment in Speed School Classrooms

The discussants described that young and older children are made to share seats and discuss together. Such modalities, they explained, facilitate the sharing of experiences and support among the students and boost their motivation and interest to learn and explore more. As reported by the participants, such discussions were designed to encourage high achieving students to support their counterparts and to learn from one another. They also reported that the teaching learning process facilitates independent learning. They also reported extensive use of locally available learning materials, such as mud, wood, sand, etc. In addition, they felt the manner with which the seats were arranged and the classroom organization, in general, foster small group learning characterized by collaborative learning and shared values. A collaborative learning is important as it develops social skills and improves students' ability to solve problems in concert with others (Burke, 2008).

D. Facilitators' Perspectives on Classroom Management

The discussants who considered respecting elders, guests, facilitators, classmates or others as ideal students' behavior believed that facilitators in the speed school classes are responsible for shaping and cultivating appropriate behavior of students. They added that they collaborate with parents to instill appropriate and valuable behaviors, such as thanks giving, forgiveness and altruistic behaviors as well.

The facilitators also reported using reinforcement more than punishment in response to students' misbehavior. They considered the first to be more effective than the latter one. When dealing with such issues, the students' emotional maturity, interest, and familial, economic, health and related backgrounds are said to be

considered. At times, they were made to read poems and monitor classrooms and in very rare cases summon their parents for discussions.

E. Facilitator to Student and Student to Student Interaction

Many studies indicate the importance of the teacher-student connection in educational practice at all levels (Xiao, 2013; Bouras & Keskes, 2014, Clark, 2014). According to Xiao (2013), this is not just pertinent, but argues that education and teaching need to be carried out within the concrete rapport between both parties. From this stance, the facilitators were asked to describe the kind of bond with their students to which they reported having excellent rapport. This is unsurprising as they are required to spend (or even eat and play together) a great deal of time with their students in the hope of understanding them better. Such relationships, they said, are part of a larger social life of these actors. For instance, facilitators often participate in various cultural and religious ceremonies together with their students. This, coupled with positive student-student relationship, is believed to help them develop a team spirit as well as learning together.

F. The Impact of Assessment and Feedback

As is the case in primary schools in the country, continuous assessment in the speed school classes accounts for 80% of the total score. The facilitators reported that assessments are made at the end of every lesson and tests at the end of every chapter using various mechanisms. These, they said, are followed by immediate feedback that assist the facilitators to monitor the students' progress in due time. They also reported the use of special supports for low achieving students.

G. Job Status

The discussants reported satisfaction with what they do and the profession in general for a number of reasons. To begin with, they felt they were helping children who were out of school and who would be scientists and leaders in the future. That they were close to their respective localities and were learning from the experience were also cited as a reason. In addition, the participants cited the better results of ex-speed school students in later grades as one of the reasons for having a favorable attitude towards the profession. Apart from what the facilitators said (which appears to make sense), the fact they were able to get the job (without having to go to a college) could as well be the overriding reason. Even so, it would be unsurprising if they develop favorable reactions in the process.

4. Discussion

The study was conducted to examine the quality of the learning experiences and compare the differences in learning outcomes of students under the conventional and speed school arrangements. Outcomes of the study revealed that both teachers and

facilitators have better observations of their students' classroom behavior than the observation made by independent raters. However, observations made by independent raters appear to show better learning experiences in speed schools than conventional schools. The quantitative results were also substantiated with those identified during the focus group discussions. The facilitators reported that students in speed schools interact well with each other as well as with their facilitators because of the ample opportunities for doing so.

The students' test results in basic literacy and numeracy scores indicated that those under the speed school classrooms have higher mean scores than those under the conventional classes. The facilitators felt that the classroom environment and the regular assessment and feedback could have contributed to improved performance among students.

The differences observed in performance between the students under the two school arrangements, minimal though, were found to be significant. Although a number of factors could contribute to the differences observed in favor of the students in the speed school classrooms (e.g., age, emphasis on numeracy and literacy) observations of the classroom context and discussions with the facilitators reveal that the difference has to do with the appropriateness of the learning environment and the determination of the facilitators.

The classroom environment in the speed schools is decorated with locally made materials that are believed to encourage the students to read words and do counting. It was interesting to witness learning materials of all sorts on all four walls as well as hanging from the ceiling rafters and on the floors of the speed school classes. The kids in these classrooms were more engaged than those in the conventional classes, partly due to the abundance of self-learning materials as well as the methodology employed by the facilitators. In an environment which fosters connective instruction characterized by a sense of support and warmth and where the teacher encourages student autonomy and is perceived as caring, accepting and involved, affective, cognitive and behavioral engagement and growth occur. Students are more persistent and effortful, happier and more enthusiastic about learning (Martin & Dowson, 2009).

What is interesting to note is that the speed school children are taught by facilitators who have received a special training, as opposed to the formal school teachers who were college graduates. As the study revealed that students taught by the facilitators outperformed those taught by the formal teachers, it is essential to look into the contents and approaches of the teacher training colleges. A study conducted by Sussex University in collaboration with Hawassa University also revealed that the unique features of speed schools might have contributed to the differences in achievement between the two groups (Akyeampong et al., 2012).

The report mentions such unique features of the speed school pedagogy as its emphasis on collaborative learning as well as interactive question and answer sessions that must have helped the students acquire better skills in numeracy and basic literacy. This goes in line with a study by Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneidr, and Shernoff

(2003) that revealed that students enjoyed more when they are actively engaged in individual as well as group tasks than when the teacher either lectures or shows videos. It is also the case that students learn better when their teachers help them exercise higher order cognitive tasks (Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, and Rodriguez, 2003). The use of locally available instructional materials, coupled with the better opportunities given to engage students in the process of learning is believed to have assisted the students to get a good grasp of the contents presented. The relatively higher mean observation score among the students in speed school classrooms complements the findings indicated in the report.

Another possible reason for the observed difference in achievement scores between the two groups could be the age difference. Studies confirmed that age of entry has an impact on school performance as children who started kindergarten at a later age were found to perform better during their primary school grades (Early Child Care Research Network, 2007). Older children have also been found to perform better in assessment tasks (Voyles, 2011) and developed better skills of social competence (Jurges & Shneider, 2006).

The difference in student engagement in the learning process could be another reason for the difference in academic performance among the students. The speed school classes have been described as providing better opportunities for students to be engaged in the process of learning. Studies indicate that student engagement in learning tasks have significant contribution to improving student performance (e.g., Wenglinsky, 2001).

The difference in the number of hours the students spend in performing the various numeracy and literacy tasks might also have contributed to the observed disparity in literacy and numeracy scores among the students in speed school classes and conventional classes. A study by Morrow, Strickland and Woo (1998) revealed that students who have worked for longer school hours were found to perform better in literacy tasks. It could also be the case that the smaller class size in the speed school classes must have created better opportunities for interaction between students and the facilitators as studies also revealed that students in smaller class size get better teacher attention and opportunities for interaction (e.g. Murray and Holt, 2014).

5. Conclusion and Implications

This study was primarily designed to examine the academic performance of students from two different instructional arrangements: speed school classrooms and conventional school classrooms. Based on the data obtained from the survey, outcome measures and students' current academic records, the following are the key conclusions and their implications for scaling up or adopting the speed school classrooms, which enable out of school children to get a second chance of access to basic literacy and numeracy skills in other similar zones.

The study revealed that speed school classrooms had positive school environment experiences characterized by small class size, decorated *six walls* with teaching materials, better student discipline and self-regulated behavior, better classroom management by facilitators and high levels of time on task for children. This is important for the Regional Education Bureau (REB) in its efforts to closely work with speed school project managers to improve the transition process and monitoring progress after the students join conventional school classrooms. In addition, it indicates the specific elements of speed school model that work better and, as a result, need to be adopted to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills of children.

It was also revealed that there are relatively better quality learning experiences under speed school classrooms than conventional school classrooms. From this point of view, it is advisable if the REB can create better linkages with speed school implementers in an attempt to share better teaching practices so as to improve the quality of teaching experience in conventional schools. This might include fostering consultation and even collaboration between speed school facilitators and teachers in the associated conventional schools.

Given the similarity of low mean scores in both groups, the study shows that there were statistically significant differences in both teacher-made and expert-made test scores of basic literacy and numeracy skills. In both cases, the students under speed school classrooms scored better than conventional schools classrooms. Again, this would, to some extent, imply the need for developing a sense of ownership of the speed school classrooms model for better learning in basic literacy and numeracy skills on the part of REB.

The fact that facilitators in the speed school classes have a better belief of the quality of good teachers might have influenced their practice and, of course, the outcome of their students. A number of studies revealed that students are observed to perform better when their teachers have positive beliefs about them (e.g., Oquendo, 2012). It is also indicated that when teachers possess good attitudes and emotions about their job, then their students are observed to have better understanding of the concepts presented (Mansor, Haima, & Osman, 2010). Likewise, a study by Mischo and Maab (2012) confirms that improvement in students' academic competence was mediated by their teachers' beliefs.

In general, although there are a number of lessons to be learnt, a more meaningful and practical way would call for an extensive research and critical look into every facet of the programs, followed by a series of seminars and discussions with stakeholders, the REB and the Ministry of Education among others. While there is no denying that the speed school classrooms model work, but there should be further improvement by continuing to build facilitators pedagogical expertise through further long term training. Finally, it is essential to mention that speed school is a highly effective way to bring formal education to the sizable out-of-school children population and that the model itself warrants being scaled and sustained. It both offers vital basic skills to youth and serves as a reliable pathway into the formal education system.

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